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**Highlands Council Issues Abstract Outlining Benefits for Planning Area Towns
Conforming to the Regional Master Plan**

Chester, NJ- The New Jersey Highlands Council released an abstract today, *The Highlands Regional Master Plan and the Benefits and Incentives to Municipal and County Conformance*, which addresses the scope and purpose of the Regional Master Plan as well as the various benefits created by the Legislature to encourage municipal and county conformance to the Plan.

“Given the complex nature of the Highlands legislation, we feel it is particularly important to disseminate clear and accurate information to the public,” said Council Chairman John Weingart. “This abstract outlines the benefits of conformance to the Regional Master Plan in both the Preservation Area and the Planning Area as well as the advantages of becoming a voluntary receiving area for transfer of development rights in Planning Area towns. I believe Highlands communities will be interested in the legal shield provided under the Act and COAH’s requirement to consider the Regional Master Plan prior to making round three rules determinations for any of the 88 municipalities in the Highlands Region.”

Some of the incentives of conformance to the Plan include Highlands Council Planning Grants, Tax Stabilization Funding, Smart Growth Aid, a Legal Shield, Impact Fees, and Enhanced Planning Grants.

“The Highlands legislation offers several benefits to local governments which choose to opt into the Regional Master Plan. Perhaps the most important is the creation of a legal shield for all their planning decisions,” said Council Member and Bernardsville Council Member Mikael Salovaara. “Participation in the Regional Master Plan also permits municipalities to coordinate environmental and affordable housing requirements on a regional level.”

This is the first in a series of abstracts being developed by the Highlands Council in an effort to inform the public about the impact of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act on the region.

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